



Representative **Kathy Haigh**

2001 Session Review

District 35

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Committee assignments:

Education (*vice-chair*)

Rules

State Government

Transportation

Joint Committee on

Veterans and Military Affairs

Joint Legislative Audit
and Review Committee

Working for Our Veterans

Transportation: The Unsolved Crisis

A Good Year for Public Schools

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

You might not know this from casually following the headlines for the last several months, but the Legislature dealt with quite a few things in addition to transportation this year. We had some notable successes that promise to benefit citizens throughout the state. And while something like the transportation fiasco can help to draw attention from lesser problems, it is still important to note some of those problems. No long legislative session is ever about just one issue, and the one that concluded on July 25 – the second-longest in our state's history – was no exception.

This was the year for the Legislature to write the state's operating and construction budgets for the coming two years, and we accomplished both those duties — without raising a penny in new taxes.

This was perhaps the most important year for our public schools in Washington since education reform was first instituted in 1993. We had some highlights, and some disappointments as well.

This was the year in which a multi-layered energy crisis hit the American West, leading to price hikes, the threat of brownouts, and an urgent scramble to preserve the plentiful and relatively inexpensive electricity we have taken for granted for so long here in Washington.

There were more accomplishments and failures this session, far more than I can detail in this brief newsletter. But I'll try to give as complete an overview as I can. I hope you find this information helpful, and as always, I look forward to hearing your comments and suggestions, and even your criticisms. Representing our district in Olympia is both a privilege and a responsibility, and I thank you for this opportunity.

Sincerely yours,

Kathryn M. Haigh
Kathy Haigh

This newsletter was on its way to the printer when America was attacked by terrorists on September 11. For all of us, that unprecedented tragedy pushed other concerns into the wings, and I set the newsletter aside. I think that was the right decision.

Even in the midst of a national emergency, however, we still carry on the ordinary, day-to-day activities that are a vital part of America's fabric. Self-government, as represented by the Legislature, is one of the distinguishing characteristics of who we are as a people, and I don't want to let too much time pass without giving you this report. Here, then, is the delayed, but unchanged, 2001 Session Review.

Working for Our Veterans

Some of my most significant and gratifying successes this year involved my work with the Select Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs. We were able to secure funding to design and build a new facility for the Retsil veterans' home in Port Orchard, benefitting veterans already in the facility as well as future needs of the men and women who serve our country in the armed forces. With more than 17,000 military veterans and military retirees just in the 35th district, the need for this improved facility was clear. And to ease the situation for veterans in Eastern Washington, we were also able to create a new veterans' facility in the Spokane area.

Because one of my goals as a lawmaker is to do what I can at the state level to work for the men and women who serve, or have served, in America's armed forces, I'm grateful to have been recently reappointed to another term on the newly renamed Joint Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs. This position allows me to work for real change.



Artist's rendering of the soon-to-be renovated and expanded State Veterans Home at Retsil.

A Real Honor

It's not unusual for legislators to receive plaques and the like from various groups, praising a certain piece of legislation or a particular effort involving this or that issue. And while each such event is meaningful, I was especially proud and humbled this year when the U.S. Department of Defense surprised me by recognizing my work on behalf of Washington State Air and Army National Guard members. Signed by Assistant Secretary of Defense Charles L. Cragin, the award was prompted by a bill I sponsored this year to protect the employment rights of guard members and reservists called to active duty by the governor. That bill passed and was signed into law by Governor Locke, correcting a little-known but significant flaw in our legal code.

Transportation: The Unsolved Crisis

When the 2001 Legislature adjourned in July, the transportation question was still just that: a question. To some, the death of a transportation funding package was a good thing. The idea of raising gas taxes met with a significant outcry from many people in the 35th district. There's no question that the transportation crisis affects the entire state – east and west, urban and rural. And in our district, the ferry system and freight rail services are vital because they are key to services, jobs, economic growth and opportunity. Without a funding package, we risk losing those services – and because it is simply not an option to allow these systems to fail, I will continue to look at all proposals.

Regardless of the details, putting the issue to a vote of the people is clearly the only option that will work in the 35th district. Once that public vote comes, it's going to be up to every citizen to understand the problem, research the



proposals, and make the best decision they can for the future for our state. But what that decision will be is up to each citizen who chooses to vote.

A Good Year for Public Schools



The state general fund budget came in at approximately \$22.8 billion – a no-new-taxes budget that reflects significant cuts in many agency budgets, in addition to hundreds of millions of dollars in voter-mandated new spending for education. By cutting agency budgets – typically between four and six percent – we were able to create the best education budget in anyone’s memory. Highlights include:

- Per-pupil spending will grow from \$5009 to \$5315 in 2002, then to \$5484 in 2003.
- \$393 million for the new Student Achievement Program.
- \$318.4 million for K-12 state-funded staff cost-of-living increases over the next two years.
- \$82.5 million to continue the class-size reduction and extended learning components of the Better Schools Fund.
- \$2.8 million in focused assistance for consistently low-performing schools.
- \$6.6 million for increased school safety, including \$500,000 to develop a plan to prevent school bullying and harassment.

There were disappointments – as you’ll see in the next item. But overall, I believe we’re still moving education in the right direction. And in a year during which many of our state’s priorities suffered at the hands of a bitterly divided Legislature, I’m heartened that our children were still able to benefit.

School Accountability

As co-vice chair of the House Education Committee, and a long-time school board member at Southside School, the key issue I personally dealt with this year was education accountability. Of course, everyone is all for accountability in our schools. We all want every school to be excellent, and for every child to have a chance to reach his or her potential. The problem is, the word “accountability” means lots of different things to lots of different people.

We heard from teachers, parents, administrators, the business community, and from the commission created two years ago by the Legislature specifically for the purpose of recommending accountability legislation. Some stakeholders felt the recommended bill was too tough on schools. Others felt it wasn’t tough enough! After several months of compromise and negotiation, we wound up with a House-Senate impasse; overall, the House favored a stronger approach to accountability, and the Senate preferred to move more carefully before intervening in failing schools. In the end, no accountability bill passed – but we did earmark money in the operating budget for “focused assistance” for schools. It’s a start, and we remain committed to enacting real accountability – the third and final phase of the education reform that began in Washington nearly a decade ago.

Higher Education

There’s certainly more to education than just K-12, and this year we were able to make some significant investments in higher education as well. The 2001-2003 operating budget earmarks \$31 million to increase enrollment and programs at the state’s community colleges, four-year colleges and universities and technical schools. We have also authorized these schools to increase tuition by 6.7 and 6 percent in each of the next two years. Tuition increases make it difficult for many families and individuals to afford higher education, so we boosted financial aid programs, Promise Scholarships and work-study grants to keep higher education accessible. In addition, we passed a capital budget that makes much-needed investments in the buildings and facilities on community college campuses to provide greater access to post-high-school education for every person in the state who wants to keep learning.

Please Keep In Touch.

Ordinarily, legislative sessions during even-numbered years are short (60 days) and have a relatively limited focus. Because of many factors, including the unfinished transportation business, I expect the 2002 session to be anything but ordinary.

I’d appreciate your input as we move toward the coming session. Where do you stand on:

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ✓ Transportation? | ✓ Health care? |
| ✓ Shoreline regulations? | ✓ Primary election systems? |
| ✓ Economic development? | ✓ Anything else on your mind? |

I work for **YOU**. And the more I know about your feelings and opinions, the better job I can do. I try to be clear about my thoughts and opinions, and I am always willing to listen to yours. (See my contact info on the front page.)

Thank You.

Thanks for Helping

I want to offer a big “thanks” to the students from the 35th district who volunteered to help me and other legislators as House pages during the 2001 session. These hard-working youngsters in their green jackets are a familiar sight on the Capitol campus – delivering messages to lawmakers in committee hearings and on the House floor, assisting staff in many ways, and otherwise providing a very important public service. Here’s to the “Class of 2001.”



Kyle Chaplin,
Elma;
Mary M. Knight
High School



Rosemary Dierker,
Matlock;
Mary M. Knight
High School



Tyler Schlauderaff,
Shelton;
Shelton High School

Would you like to be a page?

If you're 14 to 16 years old and have a grade average of at least C+, you may be eligible for a one-week stint as a page. You can learn more on the Internet at <http://www.leg.wa.gov/house/hadm/pageprog.htm>, or call the Legislative Information Center at (360) 786-7573 to ask for a Page Application Form.

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